

February 24, 2021

Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
Sent via email

Re: Support for Senate Bill 19

Dear Senator Stevens,

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority supports SB19, extending the sunset date for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), which is governed by one of the Trust's statutory advisors: The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

The Trust's mission is to improve the lives and circumstances of our beneficiaries: which include Alaskans who experience intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The Trust recognizes the Special Education Services Agency (SESA) as a key service-provider for Alaskans experiencing disabilities, and partners with them in supporting the unique needs of young beneficiaries, their educators, and their families in accordance with federal law.

Among the important work performed by the agency, SESA operates the Alaska Autism Resource Center and other effective projects which provide training, resources and support to school districts and families on behalf of students experiencing autism.

In addition, SESA services save school districts and the State money by centralizing and allocating specialized technical assistance statewide, particularly for those rural and remote districts with limited resources and higher per-student costs.

The Trust supports reauthorization of SESA to June 30, 2029 to ensure continuity of services for Alaskan students with disabilities, especially those in rural and remote areas of the state.

We very much appreciate your leadership on this important legislation and urge its timely passage into law.

Sincerely,



Michael K. Abbott,
Chief Executive Officer
The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Letter os Support for SESA

Peter Hawkins <peter_hawkins@lksd.org>
To: ppillai@sesa.org

Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 11:27 AM

Dear Patrick:

I would like to take a moment and let you know how much we appreciate Angel and her work and advocacy for our Visually Impaired student. Without the help of Angel, her expertise and the support that SESA provides we would be at a serious loss here in our remote school to be able to provide the appropriate services to this student.

Thank you again for your continued efforts on our behalf.

--

Peter Hawkins
Site Administrator
Nuniwarmiut School
Mekoryuk, Alaska



Iditarod Area School District
PO Box 90
McGrath, AK 99627

Patrick Pillai, Executive Director
Special Education Service Agency (SESA)
3501 Denali Street, Anchorage AK 99503

February 1, 2021

Dear Mr. Pillai,

We, the Iditarod Area School District Special Education Department, want to let you know how much we appreciate the services that SESA provides. As special educators in a rural and remote Alaskan school district, we depend on the additional support by specialists that IASD are unable to employ (e.g., Emotional Disabilities, DHOH, Autism Specialists, etc.)

SESA provides consultation and training to meet the unique educational needs of students with disabilities. They meet with us, the teachers, parents, medical providers, and students; providing a wealth of practical information to assist the children with unique and challenging needs to succeed and reach their goals. In non-Covid years, SESA specialists will often travel to remote village schools with our special education team. This year, like us, they are utilizing remote interaction to maintain student assistance and continue to provide much needed support.

We fully endorse the continued efforts of SESA. This program is vital to the future achievements of students with disabilities across rural Alaska. School Districts would be hard-pressed to fill the shoes of SESA were they not to continue.

Sincerely,

Casey D McCarty
Special Education Coordinator
Iditarod Area School District
cmccarty@iditarodsd.org
907.524.1230

Joni McCarty
Itinerant Special Education Teacher
Iditarod Area School District
jmccarty@iditarodsd.org
907-524-1230



**Kodiak Island Borough School District
Peterson Elementary School
722 Mill Bay Road
Kodiak, AK 99615
(907) 481-6400**

February 1, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

The Kodiak Island Borough School District Special Services Department would like to take this opportunity to submit a letter of support on behalf of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). SESA provides critical support for students, families, teams and teachers in our district.

There are several challenges facing special education departments around the state and one our greatest strengths and assets is SESA. SESA provides critical support to teachers and teams with students who experience low incidence disabilities. They provide a level of professional expertise that districts around the state require in order to support students.

In Alaska, all school districts face challenges related to supporting students with disabilities in remote and rural communities. The reality is that we struggle to extend resources and develop expertise in order to provide high-quality services to every child in our state. It is only through the leadership and support that SESA provides to our district that we are able to accomplish this goal. We think of SESA as our ultimate support team. When working with new to career teachers that support is immeasurable. The professionals that work for SESA are stellar.

As a veteran special education teacher, I can personally say that the support SESA provided to me when I was early to career played a crucial part in my longevity in the profession. I love being a special educator and I am locally rooted in my island community but being a special educator is a very challenging job. One of things that makes it hard is the expectation that you are supposed to be an expert on all things related to disability. We often say that it takes a village to raise a child and that resonates deeply here in Kodiak. What I know is that it also takes a village and strong support network to develop special education teachers who will develop and become confident while providing stability to our students and families. Part of retention of teachers is directly correlated to this support.

As an administrator who recruits around the country, on behalf of our district I can tell you that part of why I can confidently bring new to career teachers to Kodiak is because we know that SESA is in our network of support. Please know that SESA is part of the bigger picture for Alaska. They are helping us to recruit and retain staff in positions that are as difficult to fill as they are to actually do.

The Kodiak Island Borough School District relies on the support of SESA to deliver high quality services to all of students in our district. Their comprehensive support services within the community of Kodiak and surrounding villages is critical to the success of our students and teachers. It is without reservation that we support and commend this invaluable program for their tireless and outstanding work within our community. Please reach out with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Saunders", written over a faint horizontal line.

Kimberlee Saunders
Assistant Director of Special Services
Kodiak Island Borough School District
722 Mill Bay Rd.
Kodiak, AK 99615
907 539-7222

SESA (U.S.) 10/10/2010



Petersburg School District
Imagine. Believe. Achieve.

February 1, 2021

To the Alaska Legislature:

My name is Bridget Wittstock, and I have been the Special Education Coordinator for the Petersburg School District for over 20 years. I was born and raised in Petersburg, and this is my 30th year working in the Petersburg School District in Special Education. Throughout my career in special education, our school district has relied on the Special Education Service Agency, or SESA, as a partner for serving our most severe and complicated students. SESA has always delivered.

Special Education is a demanding, difficult field, and there is a perpetual shortage of qualified teachers, related services professionals, and paraprofessionals. Each student with special needs is very unique, and although most students respond to research-based, best practice curriculum and direct teaching strategies, there are some students who require more intensive, extensive programs. Rural and remote towns and villages are presented with great challenges to keep up with the most current, most effective curriculum, assistive technology and teaching strategies. It is also difficult to attract and retain high quality special education teachers in these rural sites. This is where SESA's support comes in and dramatically assists in the creation of excellent programs for our students. SESA also provides on-going support as students' needs change.

The State of Alaska's support of SESA is critical for the continued quality programming and support of our most intense, most vulnerable population of students in our state. Without SESA's support, districts would be left on their own to research and develop quality programs for these low-incidence, special populations. Please continue to support this incredibly effective and critical agency that is fundamental to the education of our most vulnerable student population. Thank you for your time. We appreciate your support and dedication to our Alaskan students and families.

Sincerely,

Bridget Wittstock

Bridget Wittstock

Special Education Coordinator

Petersburg School District

P. O. Box 289 Petersburg, Alaska 99833-0289
Telephone/Fax: 877-5226-7656 website: www.pcsd.us
Erica Kludt-Painter, Superintendent

2/1/21

Dear Alaska Legislature

I am Gail Greenhalgh. I have worked with SESA staff over the last 20 years throughout the state in my capacity as Special Education Coordinator. SESA staff have provided training specific to district and student needs, provided specific information to parents, provided materials and research to assist with programming needs. I have always found SESA staff to be knowledgeable, available and creative, especially with small remote sites.

Many times, I have felt at a loss as to how to proceed to set up training or support for students and staff with very few resources. SESA has always come through with creative ways to assist and engage students or to assist with awareness of behavioral and social/emotional strategies. The training sessions offered are great for new staff and a refresher for those who have been around for a while. I appreciate the variety of resources and availability of the lending library.

I have been working with Meriah Cory (multiple disabilities specialist from SESA) for the past several years and this year she has done amazing things using distance support. Meriah has consistently been the point person for teachers to gain a better understanding of how to reframe or refocus the structure of the classroom, curriculum and interventions to create a productive and engaging program. Without Meriah's expertise and approachable manner we would not have been able to communicate and implement the needed interventions and supports. Meriah is our one constant in the every changing COVID world. Without her positive support and willingness to enlighten and educate staff it would have been impossible to provide the services to support students during this difficult time.

Thank you SESA for years of relevant and consistent support

Gail Greenhalgh
Aleutian Regional School District



AK-CASE

Alaska Council of Administrators
of Special Education

February 2021

RE: Special Education Service Agency (SESA) Reauthorization

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Alaska Council of Administrators of Special Education (AK-CASE), I am writing to provide a recommendation as you consider reauthorization of Special Education Service Agency (SESA). AK-CASE is a professional association comprised of over 45 special education administrators and passionate special educators in Alaska dedicated to advancing the success of students with exceptionalities which accomplishes its mission through advocacy, standards, and professional development.

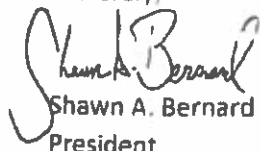
Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the status of low incidence disability support for special educators is imperative. SESA has provided a positive impact across the state, services that are vital to helping meet the needs with low incidence disabilities. Training and support from SESA is responsive and creative in their methods to support each district.

Specifically, I ask you to address the following requests:

- **Reauthorize SESA-** Special education staff have received much needed in-district, off-site, tele-presence, and web-based trainings to help meet the needs of students with low incidence disabilities. It is mission critical for districts serving a variety of needs.
- **Increase Funding-** As Alaska experiences special education teacher shortage, we need SESA more than ever. The shortage results in high turn-over and typically brings in more novice teachers with less experience with low incidence disabilities all which influence student services.

Thank you for your efforts to put forth a comprehensive reauthorization that supports special educators so that Alaskan children with low incidence disabilities can thrive. If you have any questions or require additional information about our recommendations, please contact Shawn Bernard, AK-CASE President at bernard_shawn@asdk12.org or 907-602-2871.

Sincerely,


Shawn A. Bernard

President

Alaska Council of Administrators of Special Education (AK-CASE)



President- Shawn Bernard
President Elect- Jessie Towarak

Secretary- Jessie Towarak
Treasurer- Terry Manning



from a teacher

Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Fwd: Letter to Alaska Legislature

Angelique Black <ablack@sesa.org>

Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 7:37 AM

To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>, Olivia Yancey <oyancey@sesa.org>

Good Morning! One last letter of support!

Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS
Alaska Deaf-Blind Project Coordinator
ablack@sesa.org
907.334.1300
Skype ~ ablack_sesa

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kenneth Gaylord** <kenneth_gaylord@lksd.org>

Date: Sat, Jan 30, 2021 at 12:16 PM

Subject: Letter to Alaska Legislature

To: Angelique Black <ablack@sesa.org>

Dear Alaska Legislature

I am Kenneth Gaylord, an itinerant special education teacher in the rural Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD). The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) has been an invaluable resource to me since the first day I started teaching in Alaska. SESA has provided services that I wouldn't have been able to have access to had they not existed. I'd like to request that the legislature consider to continue to fund SESA and their endeavors.

I personally have needed their assistance on a monthly basis when I was teaching in one of the remote village schools. Being a rural school district, we don't have many of the same specialists the larger school districts on the road system have. I worked with a student who is 100% visually impaired. Our district doesn't have any specialists to assist students with this disability. SESA provided services and resources that proved invaluable. They gave training to myself and my students 1:1 aide. They provided books and materials in Braille as well as a machine to create our own Braille materials. Training in how to use these resources was also provided. Their wonderful professionals also came out to our site and taught the student, their aide, and myself techniques for

2/1/2021

Special Education Service Agency Mail - Fwd: Letter to Alaska Legislature

the student to properly use a cane. We created videos of this encounter for future use and referenced them often. Had it not been for SESA none of these opportunities would have existed. The student would have been limited to what I was able to research and learn on my own.

While working in the village I was also able to benefit from their Autism and Multiple Disabilities team specialists. These specialists also provided invaluable experience and knowledge that is unavailable in our district. Our team and myself needed their expertise in working specifically with students who have Autism and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Their experts were able to recommend to us daily routines and schedules that showed immediate results and positive experiences in our students educational environment. They provided training to our aides and myself on best practices to support our current students and those who may yet see. Without their help, our students would not have shown the tremendous growth and progress they did during the school year.

I have since transitioned to work as an itinerant special education teacher for LKSD. I'm responsible for working with 10 different schools and their special education departments. Nearly every one of those schools continues to utilize the resources and expertise from SESA. I've continued to work with SESA specialists in my new role and can see the impact that they have made and continue to make on a daily basis in our schools. The training, resources, and visits they offer to individual schools has had a lasting impact on our school district.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter as you consider the reauthorization of SESA. The entire state, especially the rural areas, benefit from SESA and their services. Please continue to fund the wonderful programs and assistance that SESA offers.

Respectfully,

Kenreth Gaylord

Special Education Itinerant
Lower Kuskokwim School District
(907) 543-4877 Work
(907) 737-2229 Cell



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>
From a teacher Aide

Fwd: Support letter

Angelique Black <ablack@sesa.org>

Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 3:03 PM

To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>, Olivia Yancey <oyancey@sesa.org>

Hello . . . I'm forwarding a short note of recommendation from a paraprofessional in Mekoryuk.

Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS
Alaska Deaf-Blind Project Coordinator
ablack@sesa.org
907.334.1300
Skype ~ ablack_sesa

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Patricia Williams** <patricia_williams@lksd.org>

Date: Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 2:49 PM

Subject: Support letter

To: Angelique Black <ablack@sesa.org>

To Whom it may concern;

I am an Intensive Needs Aide 1 and works for Nuniwarmiut Schools at Lower Kuskokwim School District. I teach Braille reading and writing to one of our students that is considered legally blind.

SESA has supported me by providing materials and resources. I am very thankful to SESA for so much and by helping me and supporting me in teaching Braille to this student.

Quyana!

Thank you!

--

Patricia R. Williams
Intensive Needs Aide I



From a Parent

Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Fwd: SESA

Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:31 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Samuel Crow <SCrow@avcp.org>

Date: Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 9:40 AM

Subject: RE: SESA

To: Angelique Black <ablack@sesa.org>

Aidan is plugging along, thank you for checking in.

Here is a draft statement of support:

I remember last year when my son fell in love with basketball after we watched an NBA game. He never really considered joining a sport where his vision would make him stand out. But he loved the game, and after some thought and talk, he decided it was what he wanted to do: my sixth grader wanted to join basketball.

When he made up his mind to join the elementary basketball team, the first person I reached out to was Angel Black at SESA. She has helped Aidan and his schools since he started kindergarten. Although her visits were months apart, she built a trusting relationship with both Aidan and I. She has, over the years, helped Aidan develop skills and strategies to help him engage in the world around him, despite his visual limitations. Angel and SESA, over the years, have provided us with devices and tools to help Aidan access his school work. She has worked both as a supporter of ours in Aidan's schools; working hand in hand with his schools SPED staff, as well as an advocate. SESA and Angel have been there for Aidan when his schools did not fully support his visual needs. Even today, Angel is both offering guidance and support to Aidan's school. Her partnership with Aidan's schools have led to many positive outcomes, both academic as well as social.

So when Aidan decided to be very brave and join a sport, SESA and Angel were right there with him. The visual strategies and skills Angel was a part of building helped Aidan be a full participant, despite his limitations. From SESA and Angel, both Aidan and I have confidence and know he can succeed, despite his visual limitations.



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of
Health and Social Services**

Governor's Council on Disabilities
& Special Education

Anchorage
550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1230
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Main: 907.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

January 8, 2021

RE: Support the reauthorization of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) as recommended by the legislative audit report

To Whom it May Concern:

The Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) serves as the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) and the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) for Alaska as required under Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Council members are former special education students, parents of students with disabilities, special education teachers, school administrators, staff from the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), and others involved in the early intervention and education of infants, toddlers, and students with disabilities. The Council also fulfills the responsibilities of the majority of the Governing Board for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA).

The Legislative Committee and the Executive Committee of the Council appreciate this opportunity to support the reauthorization of the SESA as recommended by the legislative audit report. Below we have addressed the potential advantages to the SESA reauthorization for the state.

Alaska's schools are severely understaffed with special education teachers and specialized instructional support aids. Demand for highly qualified personnel as well as unfunded positions are growing these shortages, impeding the ability of students with disabilities to reach their full academic potential. Lack of qualified staff also hinders the work of districts to prepare all students to be college and career ready. SESA's **low incidence disabilities (LID)** program and grants provided education specialists who are involved with many aspects of K-12 education and professional development of teachers. The agency's outreach services help improve outcomes for students with disabilities, provide staff with customized professional development, promote retention of teachers through provision of much needed training, create networks and communities for teachers in rural environments, and assist districts in maintaining compliance and building local capacity in areas of need. For example, in Alaska, the shortage of special education teachers has led to designing alternative licensure to encourage individuals with bachelor's degrees, outside the field of education, to become special education teachers. SESA assists these new teachers when they are placed in classrooms — schools contact SESA to bridge the learning gap. Thus, SESA's on-site and distance delivered services to teachers allow for improved student achievement, decreased teacher burnout, and assist districts to stay in compliance with the requirements of special education law.

In addition, school districts are limited in their resources to hire special education teachers with endorsements in every area of disability experienced by their students. SESA provides considerable savings in meeting this need: the agency's current core funding for the low incidence disability program (\$2.4 million) if divided by 54 school districts — averages \$44,444 per district for a district with 12 schools. That will potentially allocate \$3,703 per school. Just one full-time teaching position will cost a district at least \$80,000, and most often will bring an endorsement in only one area of special education or a generic special education degree. With SESA as a resource, schools enjoy special education support inclusive of specialist endorsement in specific disability categories, which is an IDEA requirement for oversight of school programs for students with disabilities. The Alaska Legislative Audit Report indicates that schools see value in SESA services, favor staff availability, and expertise. The audit also points out SESA's efficiency: the agency handles an increased (by 63 percent) caseload without increasing LID statutory funding level that remained at its prior (2013) level. The SESA is scheduled to sunset June 30, 2021 unless reauthorized. The Council supports the reauthorization of SESA to June 30, 2029, to meet critical needs for educational services in rural Alaska. If SESA's services were not available, families would be impacted throughout Alaska's rural communities.

More information about SESA's work can be found at: <https://sesa.org/>

Senator Gary Stevens introduced a prefile bill relating to SESA, **SB 19: *Extending the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date.*** A House companion prefile bill was also introduced by Representative Story, **HB 43: *Extending the termination date of the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date.***

Respectfully,

Legislative Committee
Executive Committee



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Correspondence School

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Tracy Culbert <tracy.culbert@ideafamilies.org>

Tue, Oct 22, 2019 at 10:20 AM

To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Hi Patrick-I adjusted one sentence. Please use the feedback right below.

Even though districts receive Intensive Funding it doesn't cover the cost of a low incidence specialist nor does it cover all the costs of an IN student. In the case of a correspondence school, that doesn't receive intensive funding for their students, they definitely need access to SESA services because they still have to provide the services without special education funding. SESA is a necessity for the smaller districts that may only have one low incident student.

[Quoted text hidden]



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Debbie Treece <dtreece@chugachschoools.com>
To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Wed, Oct 2, 2019 at 9:39 AM

Hi Patrick,

Sorry for the delay in responding - your email got buried with the beginning of the year inbox flood!

Why is there a need for SESA services since school districts receive intensive funding? As the Special Education Director for a rural remote school district, the support of SESA for our staff to provide ongoing education for our students with the greatest needs is invaluable. SESA specialists provide specialized training, resources, and ongoing support to our teachers, students and families that demonstrate low incidence challenges. Without SESA support, our rural/remote staff would not have the unique support and training from educators that understand the challenges and successes that students with intensive needs bring each day.

disclaimer: current SESA Board Member/Officer - CASE representative

Thanks!
Debbie

Debbie Treece
Executive Director of Student Services
Chugach School District
907-522-7400 (office)
907-522-3399 (fax)
907-575-8702 (work cell)
dtreece@chugachschoools.com

On Aug 30, 2019, at 3:25 PM, Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Jessie Towarak <jtowarak@bssd.org>
To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Tue, Sep 3, 2019 at 11:57 AM

Good morning,

We are very appreciative for SESA's services over the past years. Serving in a district with 15 villages that span across 77,000 square miles (the size of Minnesota and North Dakota combined), it can be challenging to provide all of the services needed for students with low-incidence disabilities. Having an agency with dedicated people to serve this category of students under unique circumstances is necessary. SESA specialist have provided on-site training to teachers, paraprofessionals, and also help to facilitate very important conversations with IEP teams including parents. Specialists have that specialist knowledge that only they possess and seek to provide that understanding to the teams on the ground.

Our district has enough challenges in finding highly-qualified Special Education teachers to fill our vacancies here in rural Alaska. It would be even more difficult to find specialists in these low-incidence disability areas to choose to relocate to small villages which tend to be isolated for most. Our Special Education teachers do it all---they serve every disability area and most only have general knowledge of low-incidence disability areas. Our teachers often require these services and training opportunities from the specialist provided by SESA.

We are very thankful for SESA and the dedicated professionals who assist us in providing the best education for our students in the Bering Strait School District. We are in full support of the continuation of these services for our students in Rural Alaska.

Thank you

Jessie Towarak
Coordinator of Special Education
Bering Strait School District
Unalakleet, Alaska
(907) 717-3420 Cell
(907) 624-4278 Office
email: jtowarak@bssd.org
Skype ID: jessiepetersen



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Norma Holmgaard <nholmgaard@pelicanschool.org>

Sun, Sep 8, 2019 at 4:00 PM

To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Although we do get additional funding for intensive students, this is only one student in our district. The additional funding doesn't come close to covering the costs of providing educational and related services to this student and quality support for the family who is also learning to address the needs of these very special children. Without SESA support, this student and our district would be lost.

On Fri, Aug 30, 2019 at 3:25 PM Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

--

Norma J. Holmgaard, Superintendent

Pelican City School District

P.O Box 90

Pelican, AK 99832

(907) 735-2236

The contents of this email and any attachments to it may contain privileged and confidential information. This information is only for the viewing or use of the intended recipient(s). If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution or use of, or the taking of any action in reliance upon, the information contained in this e-mail, or any of the attachments to this e-mail, is strictly prohibited and that this e-mail and all of the attachments to this e-mail, if any, must be immediately returned or destroyed and, in either case, this e-mail and all attachments to this e-mail must be immediately deleted from your computer without making any copies hereof.



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Clayton Holland <CHolland@kpbsd.k12.ak.us>
To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Sat, Sep 7, 2019 at 1:41 PM

Hi Patrick,

SESA has provided us an invaluable service by providing expertise with students that we when we are having a hard time determine how to meet the needs of. Even though we are primarily on the road system, and have access to more supports than many locations in Alaska, we still have students that are a challenge for us that SESA is able to provide much needed help. Additionally, SESA also has provided us with trainings at no cost. Those trainings have included working with students having autism, data collections, and functional language supports.

Let me know if there is any more information that can be provided or if you would like a formal letter of support.

Thank you.

Clayton

Clayton Holland

Director of Student Support Services, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

907-714-8881

cholland@kpbsd.k12.ak.us

[Quoted text hidden]



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Shaun Streyle <sstreyle@dgsd.us>
To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Thu, Sep 5, 2019 at 1:44 PM

"Over the last several years SESA has provided guidance, support, and materials to our students with needs beyond the typical struggling learner. I think the service is particularly important and useful to teachers and schools who are unfamiliar with a disability that occur less often or for instructors with little or no experience with a students' disability and therefore, are unfamiliar with the best methods and materials to meet their individual needs. Many SPED teachers, particularly in rural locations, are not specialized in different disabilities and are left to meet the needs of all their students that walk through the door. Knowing that there is someone available to reach out to provide support and resources helps to support our teachers. SESA's staff members' specialized knowledge of specific disabilities allows staff members to create programs to enhance a students learning and create a more positive learning environment. SESA's library of resources have provided many useful tools to develop student skills and knowledge leading to greater independence and positive behavior interventions. SESA's lending library allows districts to use a wide variety of materials without individual districts investing the funding. This allows teachers and students an opportunity to work with materials and decide what works best for their student. I have found SESA to be an invaluable resource throughout my years in Alaska. I have found their suggestions helpful, their materials relevant, and their support invaluable."

This is from our SPED coordinator--- Dawn Fagenstrom

Thank You

Shaun Streyle
DGSD Superintendent

On Fri, Aug 30, 2019 at 3:25 PM Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org> wrote:
[Quoted text hidden]



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Nadene Parshall <nparshall@nomeschools.org>
To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Wed, Sep 4, 2019 at 5:50 PM

For the schools I have worked in I have found SESA to be the support we needed to gain more knowledge about the students and their needs. We have had them come out and do training on certain types of students and they have even helped the aides understand how to work with the student. There is so much knowledge that is needed to be known when working with all the different types of students there is no way everyone knows everything. We wouldn't have been as successful as we were with the students had we not had the support of SESA. SESA can be a bridge between the parents and the teachers and school. SESA is a fresh set of eyes for the schools and helps us grow in our ability to help the student. They will work with the parents and help them understand the needs of the children and how to work with them that benefits the whole family. This interaction also helps the student be successful in the school environment. SESA is our support just as we are the students support. Both supports are needed for success.

Nadene Parshall
Special Education Director
Nome Public Schools
nparshall@nomeschools.org
907-434-2231 Ext. 6208
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On Fri, Aug 30, 2019 at 3:25 PM Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org> wrote:
[Quoted text hidden]



Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Ashley Grace <ashley_grace@lksd.org>

Tue, Sep 3, 2019 at 1:05 PM

To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Typically the intensive needs funding amounts are covering the costs of hiring an aide as well as providing extra supplies and resources that might be more costly than the average student's needs. Students with various special education needs and various degrees of intensive needs are spread across 27 different schools in the district. LKSD relies on SESA and their folks who are specialized in various levels of special education to work with students with intense needs. We do not have specialist for Autism, Multiple Disabilities, VI, and HI to name a few. But yet we have students spread across our district requiring those services, as well as staff members that need support and training in those areas to help the students they are working with. Without SESA we would definitely be at a loss, and our student's success rates would decline. Therefore, we would still benefit from the services we are receiving from SESA to help meet this need in our remote schools even though we receive intensive needs funding.

Thank you

On Fri, Aug 30, 2019 at 3:25 PM Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org> wrote:

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Ashley Grace
Lower Kuskokwim School District
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and Early Childhood Education
PO Box 305
Bethel, AK 99559
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Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Alesha Ferguson <aleshaferguson@dbsd.org>
To: Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>

Tue, Sep 3, 2019 at 12:16 PM

Patrick,

The Denali Borough School District needs SESA support in addition to Intensive funding for many reasons. The largest being only a small number of the students who our district receives SESA specialist supports from are also Intensively funded students.

Last School year SESA provided Specialist supports to 7 students at DBSD and only 2 of those students are students who also received intensive funding. Without the support from SESA for the planning and monitoring of student supports to meet the needs of those 5 students we probably would have needed to consider intensive service plans for some of those other students as well. However, with the support from SESA specialists and access to SESA library materials we were able to determine the true needs of those students and their programming and behaviors did not escalate to the level that required applications to the state for intensive needs support. If the District had been in the position of having to bring in behavior and disability specific individuals to help us build a program for those students the process of locating specialists and coordinating for them to visit our sites would have taken large amounts of time and the behaviors of those students would have potentially escalated in that time to a point that the district would have no choice but to provide one to one aides for some of the students and intensive supports. SESA resources helped the district find tools and techniques that prevented that escalation, SESA support also helps us conduct FBA's on students, they also help us as we work to educate parents on the supports needed for their students. There have been several times when I as a Special Education Director have picked up the phone and called one of the SESA specialists for suggestions and support when we were as a district considering that a student might end up needing intensive supports and had the specialist make a suggestion for this student that no one from our team had thought of resulting in a complete change to the students classroom interactions.

In DBSD it is very rare for us to start working with new student in our district and say "oh this student is going to need intensive funding" from the first day that they come into our care, usually if that happens it is a student who transferred to us from another program with those supports already in place or it is a student from the early childhood program/child find program with a complex medical history of needs. With other students it is often after we have attempted a series of interventions and supports that we determine that the student is not responding to and after SESA Specialists from that area of expertise have come in and worked with the district in attempting to meet the students needs that the district determines that the IEP needs of the student have reached the

level of needing intensive services. The result of that is it is often after the October Count when we as a district see that a student is in need of this high level of support and we do not receive intensive funding that year for the student yet still we need to provide the students with supports from experts. The isolated nature of our communities make it where we do not have readily available to us specialists in Autism, TBI, Emotional Disturbance, and other less frequently occurring disabilities. Yet when we have them we need help and that is where SESA steps up and helps us to plan for and meet the needs of these students.

SESA specialists support our district via phone conferences and video conferences on a regular basis and the specialist makes 1 or 2 trips to the school depending on need each year. During that visit they provide needed staff and parent training as well as interactions with the students which help them better support the staff and parents during those long distance support interactions. Without the supports provided by SESA our school district would be significantly disadvantaged in our ability to services this small percentage of our students who have needs above and beyond the other students on our case loads but are not at the same level of need as our intensively funded students.

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